



## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release MAY 27, 1961

#### OUTLOOK BLEAK FOR 1961 DUCK CROP

Serious drought conditions on the best duck nesting areas on the Canadian prairies threaten to sharply curtail waterfowl production again this year, the Department of the Interior announced today.

The first report on waterfowl breeding ground conditions shows there is serious drought on the grasslands and a fair portion of the parklands of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, the Fish and Wildlife Service said. The same condition extends into the duck nesting areas of the Dakotas, Montana and Minnesota in the United States.

The Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife now has an aerial survey team counting the breeding waterfowl in important Canadian nesting areas.

Large sections of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba are expected to be out of production for ducks this year, the first reconnaissance revealed. Large numbers of potholes and sloughs are dry and many remaining water areas now getting heavy use by the ducks are at such low levels that they are likely to go dry in two to four weeks unless there are heavy rains.

The report from the field states waterfowl breeding habitat is in a poorer condition than it was last year or in 1959. Southern Alberta and southern Saskatchewan are drier now than they were in the 30's lifelong residents there say.

As in 1959, large numbers of waterfowl displaced by lack of water on the prairies have pushed northward and less production is expected from those breeding birds.

In contrast to 1959, where there is water on the prairies, a nesting effort is now taking place there. However, because water levels are low and dropping, very few broods resulting from this nesting effort will have water on which to develop unless there is unusually heavy rainfall in June and July.

The drought also has resulted in an increase in the burning and plowing of waterfowl nesting cover. Where there has been only burning, the cover will re-establish itself. However, where a nesting area has been both burned and plowed, it probably will be lost to duck use for several seasons. Some areas may be lost permanently.

The migration of birds northward appears to be on a normal schedule. Ice in the northern lakes and bush is light and is expected to open up rapidly with the advent of warmer weather.

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